



We made the boys a fire engine!

# Becoming A Thrifty Family Has Really PAID OFF!

## Jen set her hubby and sons a penny-pinching challenge - saving over £2k



**Jen Gale, 35, Warminster, Wilts**

**W**ho doesn't love having a bit of extra cash in their pocket? Saving money on your supermarket shop, getting a good 2 for 1 deal...

Every penny helps. Well, in September 2012, me and my hubby, Ben, 37, set ourselves the ultimate challenge. To refrain from buying anything new for 12 months!

'We've got everything we need,' I said, when our son,

Samuel, came along. We already had a little boy, William, then 3, so there were bags full of hand-me-down clothes and toys in the loft. 'What's the point in splashing out on more?' I said to Ben. 'It would be a waste of money,' he agreed. Then it got me thinking. *How much stuff did one family really need?* 'What was the point in buying more, just to clutter the house?' 'Why don't we stop buying new things for a whole year?' I said. 'Sounds tricky,' Ben replied. I had to admit, it wasn't going to be easy. I loved treating myself to clothes now and then.

### BEN SAYS...

**W**hen Jen first started to talk about the idea of a whole year of not buying anything new, I was sceptical. I was concerned how I'd make do without the stuff I wanted. 'It's been a challenge finding decent second-hand clothes in

the local charity shops, as the styles in there are more for older men. But I love the fact I've earned the title 'Daddy Fix It'. And now I have enough glues, tapes and adhesives for a lifetime!



And William and Samuel wouldn't be happy about having no new toys. We only had to take them out shopping and William would beg for something. 'I don't care what it is, I'd just like something,' he'd frown. Yes, it was definitely going to be tough! But I was determined. So, I made a list of rules. From now on, we'd make do and mend. And, apart from food and essentials, we weren't allowed to buy anything new. Clothes, toys, books, DVDs, newspapers...

'Everything we buy has to be second hand, pre-owned, used, or vintage,' I told Ben. We started by raiding our local charity shop when we needed clothes for the boys. 'There are loads of old books and toys that we can buy for birthday and Christmas presents too,' I gushed. But finding things that Ben liked was harder. 'This jumper's ideal for work,' I said, handing him a woolly top. 'Not very stylish, is it?' he complained, pulling a face. 'But it's cheap, and pre-owned,' I reminded him.

Rummaging through the racks of clothes, he soon got into the spirit of bargain hunting. 'I've found some decent jumpers for the boys,' he said, happily. I hit upon some lovely dresses and shoes for myself, too. And the best part? We'd hardly spent a thing, and what we had was going to a good cause. *Amazing!* After that, Ben and I really threw ourselves into our challenge. Before, if something in the house broke, we'd be straight down the shops buying a brand new replacement. But now of course, the rule was to make do and mend. So, when the washing basket snapped one morning...

**We started by raiding our local charity shop**

Then I added a mixture of

'I'll fix it,' Ben said, securing it with duct tape and glue. 'Good as new,' I beamed, when he'd finished. As well as fixing stuff around the house, I decided we could cut costs by making things. *It will save us a fortune, and be fun,* I thought. So I got to work, being creative. Instead of buying baby wipes, I created my own. Took an old towel and cut it up into small squares. Then, when we went out, I'd wet a few and put them in a plastic bag to keep them damp. 'We can wash them and re-use them,' I explained to Ben. But I didn't stop there. Even experimented with making my own deodorant - solid coconut oil, mixed with cornflour and bicarbonate of soda. Then I added a mixture of

essential oils to make it smell fresh. 'Saves us splashing out on deodorants and perfumes,' Ben said, amazed at my efforts. 'Good for the environment, too,' I grinned, thinking of all the plastic packaging we'd managed to save. When it came to birthdays, Ben and I got busy making presents for friends and family. We even made my sister-in-law, Katie, a lamp out of an empty wine bottle and old fairy lights. 'I love it. It's so unique,' she beamed, when she saw it. I taught myself to sew and crochet, too. Made myself a hat for the winter. And the boys were never chilly in all the thick woolly scarves I made them. Not one to waste good wool, I even made hats and mittens for us all, out of an old jumper. I cut the arms off, then sewed up the ends and made holes for the thumbs.

I turned an old jumper into a hat, scarf and mittens!



**I'M A REAL MONEY SAVING EXPERT!**



My first attempt at headwear



Now hat's perfect!

## JEN & BEN'S SAVING TIPS

- When old jeans wear out, don't throw them away, turn them into a new skirt or shorts instead.
- Any fruit that's past its best, can be made into a lovely smoothie or milkshake.
- Check out sites like Freecycle and Freegle to see what you can pick up for free.
- If you've shrunk a jumper in the wash, save it to make easy hats from, in the winter.
- If you have small children, learning how to sew on a simple patch could save you a small fortune in new trousers!
- Plan your meals in advance for the week ahead, so you know exactly what you need, and make sure you use up any leftovers.
- With a bit of imagination, cardboard boxes can make great toys for kids.
- Turn an old vest into a simple shopping bag by sewing up the bottom. You'll never need a plastic one again!
- Re-use old envelopes and wrapping paper.
- Cut the front off Christmas and birthday cards - they make fancy note paper.

